

THE MILITARY PROBLEM IN INDIA

by

T. A. BISSON

with the aid of the Research Staff of the Foreign Policy Association

1 1 1

INTRODUCTION

THE elaboration of a satisfactory method for transferring the administration of Indian military affairs to responsible control is likely to prove one of the most difficult problems confronting the round-table conference now assembled at London. To a greater extent than in the field of either civil or fiscal administration, the organization and control of the Indian Army has been retained in British hands. Indian opinion is keenly conscious of what it considers undue delay in Indianizing the army, while British opinion stresses the dangers involved in precipitate advance. Although willing to accept the British contention that self-defense is the basis of responsible government, India's national leaders are determined to reduce the transitional period to a minimum.

The army of India, in the broad sense of the term, includes not only the regular army of British India but also the non-regular auxiliary, territorial, and reserve forces, as well as the forces maintained by the Indian States.¹ This report is primarily concerned with the regular army of British India, generally known as the Indian Army, particularly with reference to the problems involved in transforming it into the national army of an autonomous India.

GROWTH OF THE INDIAN ARMY

The origins of the Indian Army, as now constituted, lie in the defense forces maintained to protect the early trading posts established by the East India Company at Madras and Bombay, and later at Calcutta.² These forces were in part sent out from England and in part recruited from the local

population, and were steadily enlarged during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Until 1757 the army contained Indian companies which were under the command of their own Indian officers. The reorganization effected in this year by Clive, first of the great Empire builders in India, introduced a British element into the Indian units but still left a higher proportion of Indian than of British officers. This innovation was carried a step further in 1796, when the number of British officers assigned to the Indian infantry battalions was greatly increased. At this time the armies under the East India Company's control consisted of 13,000 European and 67,000 Indian troops. The disparity in the numbers of foreign and native troops had become much more pronounced just prior to the Mutiny in 1857, when there was a total of 231,000 Indian to 38,000 British troops.

The principles underlying the reorganization of the Indian Army carried through after the Mutiny, when the Crown assumed direct responsibility for the government of British India, have since continued to exert a controlling influence upon British military policy in India. As recommended in 1859 by the Peel Commission, it was decided that the ratio of Indians to Europeans in the infantry and cavalry should not exceed two to one for Bengal and three to one for Madras and Bombay, that the artillery should be chiefly manned by Europeans, that so far as possible Europeans alone should be employed in the scientific branches of the defense services, and that the Indian section of the army should be composed of different nationalities and castes which should, as a general rule, be mixed promiscuously through each regiment.³ Shortly thereafter the practice of

1. The armies of the Indian States, comprising 36,121 troops on October 1, 1929, are now placed at the disposal of the Government of India in time of need, and would presumably be similarly available in case of emergency for use by a federal government which included the Indian States.

2. *Indian Year Book, 1931*, p. 298-296.

3. *Report of the Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Organization of the Indian Army* (London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1859), p. ix-xv.

excluding Indians from the higher officer-ships of the army became fixed, and its total strength was set at 65,000 British to 140,000 Indian troops, a proportion which has since been altered but slightly. In 1929 the Indian Army consisted of approximately 60,000 British and 150,000 Indian troops, with 6,771 officers holding the King's commission, of whom less than 100 were Indians.⁴

INDIANIZATION OF THE ARMY

The problem of Indianization involves the replacement of the British troops and officers now serving in the Indian Army with Indian troops and officers. The chief difficulty centres on the necessity of overcoming the virtual monopoly of higher commissions held by the British officers.

As a result of the changes effected after the Mutiny, the commissioned ranks of the Indian Army were entirely filled by British officers up to 1905. In that year, however, a Viceroy's commission, carrying the power of command over Indian troops only, was instituted for Indian officers. The highest rank to which a Viceroy's commissioned officer is eligible to rise is that of company officer in a regimental unit, i.e., his position always remains subordinate to that of the lowest British subaltern. In 1918, as a recognition of India's war service, a further step was taken looking toward the provision of Indian officers for the Indian Army. At this time, Indians were made eligible to hold the King's commission in the infantry and cavalry (but not the artillery, engineer, signal, tank, or air) branches of the Indian Army. In addition, ten annual vacancies were thrown open to Indians at Sandhurst, the Royal Military College⁵ in England, and a training school for Indian cadets was opened at Indore. The latter school, which was set up to meet war needs, was closed after one year. In all, 49 cadets were admitted to the Indore school, 39 of whom received the King's commission. In March 1922 a military academy, at which prospective Indian officers may obtain their preparatory education, was set up at Dehra Dun.

Up to 1923, the Indian officers who had

obtained the King's commission were posted to units in which they served shoulder to shoulder with their fellow British officers. In that year, however, Lord Rawlinson, Commander-in-Chief in India, announced the adoption of the "eight units scheme" as a method designed to test the practicability of successful Indianization. Under this scheme, out of a total of 132 infantry battalions and 21 cavalry regiments of the Indian Army, six infantry battalions and two cavalry regiments were selected to be Indianized by posting the Indian commissioned officers to these units. As the Indian officers in these eight units gradually achieved seniority, the units would in due course be entirely officered by Indians. The process was to be completed by 1946, at which time a decision would be made in regard to the efficiency of the Indian units as compared with that of the regular units of the army.⁶

Between 1921 and 1925 the Indian members of the Legislative Assembly offered several resolutions which demanded a speeding-up of the pace of army Indianization.⁷ A resolution adopted by the Government of India in 1925 resulted in the appointment of the Indian Sandhurst Committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Andrew Skeen, to recommend methods whereby the number and quality of Indian candidates for the King's commission might be improved, and to consider the advisability of establishing a military college in India. The committee presented a unanimous report in November 1926, advising an initial doubling of the vacancies allotted to Indians at Sandhurst, to become effective in 1928, with an additional increase of four each year until 1933, when a military college with a capacity for 100 students should be set up in India. It also recommended that Indians should be made eligible to receive the King's commission in the artillery, engineer, signal, tank, and air branches of the army, and to facilitate this object advised that from 1928 eight annual vacancies be made available to Indians at Woolwich⁸ and two at Cranwell,⁹ with successive increases thereafter. The

4. *Indian Year Book, 1931*, cited, p. 308, 311. In addition, 4,732 Indians held Viceroy's commissions, entitling them to subordinate positions of command over Indian troops.

5. For infantry and cavalry.

6. *Report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee* (London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1927), p. 9.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 6-7, footnote.

8. Royal Military Academy (for artillery and engineers).

9. Royal Air Force Cadet College.

committee estimated that under this scheme half the total cadre of commissioned officers in the Indian Army would be Indians by 1952. It threw out a warning, however, that Indian candidates would not be forthcoming in the numbers called for unless the system of recruitment be improved by a wider measure of publicity, by less rigidly official channels of choice, by a decrease in the number of official stages to be traversed, and by the provision of financial aid to successful candidates. Finally, the committee noted criticism of the "eight units scheme" as an invidious form of race segregation, and registered its opinion that the scheme was too severe a test of the first generation of Indian officers, and in conflict with the principle of British-Indian cooperation applied in all other spheres of Indian administration.¹⁰ In this connection it stated that "Indian officers, if they are to pull their weight in the Army in India, must be empowered, like their British comrades, to take command of other British officers junior to themselves, and to take command of mixed bodies of troops."¹¹ The committee therefore recommended that the "eight units scheme" be abandoned, and that Indian commissioned officers be made eligible to be posted to any Indian unit.

The recommendations of the Indian Sandhurst Committee were acted upon in March 1928. While it was decided that the "eight units scheme" should be adhered to as the method of Indianization, the Government of India announced that the annual vacancies allotted to Indians at Sandhurst would be increased from 10 to 20, and that several vacancies would also be thrown open to Indians at Woolwich and Cranwell.¹² Five additional vacancies at Sandhurst were also made available to Indian officers holding a Viceroy's commission. The proposal for establishing a military college in India, however, was set aside until a larger number of qualified Indian candidates should appear.

The number of Indian candidates qualified for Sandhurst exceeded the allotted number of vacancies for the first time at the half-

yearly examination in November 1929, when there were eighteen successful candidates for ten vacancies. At this time, also, six Air Force candidates succeeded in qualifying for Cranwell, and two Indians passed into Woolwich. At present the average annual number of successful Indian candidates for the English military colleges is 22 or 23 for Sandhurst (including two or three nominated cadets holding the Viceroy's commission), and three or four for either Woolwich or Cranwell.¹³

AUXILIARY FORCES

As auxiliaries to the regular army of British India, two additional bodies—the Auxiliary Force (a European body) and the Territorial Force (an Indian body)—have been constituted.¹⁴ Units of the Auxiliary Force are under command of the local military authority, which has power to call them out for local service in case of emergency, and training is carried on for limited periods throughout the year. It comprises all the military branches—infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineers, machine-gun companies, a signal company, and a medical and veterinary corps.

The Territorial Force is intended to place military training within reach of all classes of Indians, and to furnish a second line to and a source of re-enforcement for the regular army. It consists of provincial battalions and urban units, the members of which undergo a short period of intensive training during successive years, and of university training corps units, which engage in weekly drills. The provincial battalions, now numbering 18, are so far entirely infantry, although by law other branches of the service may be constituted. Enrollment in the provincial battalions carries a liability for overseas as well as home service. Four urban units were organized in 1928 in Bombay, Madras, and the United Provinces. Members enroll for a six-year period, and are subject to service within their province only. The university training corps units are recruited from the staff and students of Indian universities. While there is no liability for military service in the university units,

10. *Report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee*, cited, p. 17-19.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

12. *Government of India's Despatch on proposals for Constitutional Reform*, dated 20th September, 1930, Cmd. 3700 (H. M. Stationery Office, 1930), p. 138.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 138-139.

14. *Indian Year Book*, 1931, cited, p. 304-305.

they are expected to be a source of supply of both officers and men for the provincial and urban units.

A considerable body of Indian opinion is desirous of expanding the Territorial Force both as a means of hastening the formation of a national army and of supporting internal security.¹⁵ It claims, however, that the measures adopted to further these ends are wholly inadequate, especially in contrast with those taken in respect to the Auxiliary Force. Whereas, in the military budget for 1928-1929, provision was made for an Auxiliary Force of approximately 36,000 men at an expenditure of Rs. 61 lakhs (\$21,960,000), the Territorial Force was limited to a maximum strength of 20,000 men on Rs. 29 lakhs (\$10,440,000) of expenditure.¹⁶ Official opinion, however, claims that the Territorial Force is in the nature of an experiment, and argues the need of assuring a sufficient body of recruits as the basis for a further advance.

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL SECURITY

The positive arguments presented by the Simon Commission in support of the necessity for maintaining a considerable body of British troops and officers in India for some time to come turn upon the requirements of external and internal security.¹⁷ It points out that the Indian Army must constantly provide against actual dangers on the north-west frontier from raiding tribes, and against a potential threat from Russia or Afghanistan. During the past century there have been three Afghan wars; and from 1850 to 1922 there were 72 expeditions against the frontier tribes—an average of one a year. Furthermore, India has need of large bodies of troops, to support internal order, whose neutrality in communal conflict is not only assured but generally recognized. The army in India is habitually called upon

to support the police in coping with mobs driven frantic by religious frenzy. In such cases of communal conflict, the generally accepted neutrality of the British soldier makes his intervention authoritative. For this reason also, in the units earmarked for internal security, British soldiers outnumber Indians in the ratio of eight to seven. Lastly, the Simon Commission emphasizes the widely differing military capacity of the various Indian races. While 54 per cent of the total combatant troops in the Indian Army, for example, come from the Punjab, vast areas and communities in other sections of India furnish scarcely a man. During the World War, when the Government of India was straining every nerve to enlist further recruits, no appreciable change occurred in the racial proportions of the volunteers. Under these circumstances, it concludes that India would be exposed to grave danger should the British troops and officers be withdrawn, leaving the army to consist merely of the representatives of the Indian martial communities.

Indian opinion, however, does not accept the Simon Commission's judgment on India's ability to provide for its external defense and to maintain internal order. It points out that underlying the Simon Commission's arguments for the continued maintenance of British troops and officers in India is the tacit assumption of the inferiority of Indian troops and officers. This assumption is challenged by Indian opinion. Whatever truth exists in the charge of Indian incapacity for military leadership is held to be owing to the "manner in which it has been sedulously fostered by the system of training to which the sepoy has been subjected. Military leadership is as much the result of training, opportunity and education as of natural aptitude."¹⁸ Given the opportunity for adequate training, India has no doubt that it can provide efficient and capable officers for its army. Regarding the ability of the Indian soldier there is no question. British eye-witnesses have themselves lauded the record made by Indian troops on the battlefields of France against the best-disciplined and most highly mechanized European

15. The Indian Central Committee, for example, recommended that the Governments of Madras and Bombay, where conditions are most favorable, should be given power to equip and maintain a local military force and a local militia for the support of internal order. (Cf. *Report of the Indian Central Committee, 1928-29*, Chairman, Sir Sankaran Nair; London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1929, p. 58-59.)

16. Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, "The Army and Navy in India," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. CXLV, Part II, September 1929, p. 25.

17. *Indian Statutory Commission* (London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1930), Vol. I, p. 93-98.

18. Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, *Indian Constitutional Problems* (Bombay, D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1928), p. 106.

armies.¹⁹ But the immediate dangers to be apprehended on India's frontiers are from Asiatic enemies, against whom the British military authorities even now rely upon units composed of one British soldier to six or seven Indians. A British observer declares that the Sikhs would of themselves be sufficiently capable of dealing with the frontier tribes or Afghanistan.²⁰ The possibility of a land invasion by a European power is held to be remote; and the efforts of the League of Nations, of which India is a member, are held to be sufficient to protect her from deliberate aggression by a naval power.²¹ In any case, as a member of the British Commonwealth, an autonomous India would still be entitled to the protection accorded the other Dominions by the British Navy.²² By the resolute pursuit of a policy of peace with Afghanistan and Russia, untroubled by the necessity of supporting Imperial supremacy in the East, India considers it possible still further to minimize whatever danger may exist. As an earnest of this policy, it is reported that Mahatma Gandhi has already established a basis of friendly relations with

the frontier tribes which have been such a thorn in the side of the British administration, and that Afghanistan is prepared to enter into alliance with a responsible Indian government.²³

With regard to the problem of internal order, it is pointed out that the primary agency for maintaining public tranquillity is the Indian police force.²⁴ The neutrality of the police force, however, has never been questioned; on the contrary, full tribute has often been paid to the faithfulness with which it has discharged its arduous duties in the most trying circumstances of civil disorder. The regular troops are called in not because the neutrality of the Indian police is suspected but because they are inadequate in numbers and armament. There is therefore no real ground for suggesting that the Indian soldier who has gone through a severer training and discipline than the police officer is not dependable in dealing with communal disturbances. The Simon Commission presents no figures to support its assertion that British troops are usually requisitioned in times of communal stress, an assertion which is contradicted by the Indian Central Committee, which states that judging from recent practice it has become the fixed policy to employ Indian troops alone in putting down communal riots, owing to popular resentment against the use of British troops.²⁵ In such cases, it has proved quite easy to send Indian troops free from any probable bias to the affected areas. Moreover, as has been already noted, it is asserted that the adequate development of provincial militias would effectively serve to relieve the regular army of the task of maintaining internal order.²⁶

Finally, Indian opinion claims that the varying military capacity of the different races of India has been exaggerated, and that such differences as may exist are largely due to the policy of confining recruitment to particular areas and classes.²⁷ The slight

19. The story of their activities is characterized as "one of almost monotonous heroism." (Cf. Lt.-Colonel J. W. B. Merewether and Lt.-Colonel Sir Frederick Smith, *The Indian Corps in France*, London, John Murray, 1918, preface, p. xix.)

20. Edward Thompson, *Reconstructing India* (New York, The Dial Press, 1930), p. 268.

21. G. T. Garratt, *An Indian Commentary* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1928), p. 207-208.

22. Since 1869 India has paid a contribution of varying amounts to the British Government in consideration of services performed by the Royal Navy. Under existing arrangements, which date from 1896-1897, India contributes £100,000 annually for the upkeep of certain ships of the East India Squadron. In addition, the Government of India maintains the Indian Marine, comprising a few small ships which have been used chiefly for purposes of transport and patrol. A considerable body of Indian opinion has been increasingly desirous of expanding the Indian Marine into a national naval force and of staffing it with Indian officers. Under the last Conservative government in England, an enabling act was passed through both Houses of Parliament providing for the reorganization of the Indian Marine into a purely combatant naval service to be known as the Royal Indian Navy, with a strength in the first instance of 4 armed sloops, 2 patrol vessels, 4 mine-sweeping trawlers, 2 surveying ships, and 1 depot ship. In order to effect the change in title, it was necessary to draft a new Indian Naval Discipline Act, which had to be passed by the Legislative Assembly and Council of State in India. The bill was submitted to the Indian Legislature in February 1928, but was rejected by the Assembly. The main reasons which influenced Indian rejection of the measure were: (1) that the control of the proposed navy vested not in the Government of India but in the British Government, (2) that Indians were eligible to only one-third of the officers' commissions, (3) that no statutory obligation for the manning of the ships by Indians was imposed, and (4) that the British Government was enabled to employ the navy in any part of the world without legal liability to pay the expenses incurred during the period of such employment. These objections had been pointed out during the passage of the original bill in the House of Commons, but the Conservative government had not allowed them to influence its opinion. While the Government of India was forced by the Legislative Assembly's rejection of the Naval Discipline Act to leave the title of the Indian Marine unaltered, it has since carried through the reorganization of the service along the lines originally proposed. The Royal Indian Marine is now one of the combatant forces of the Empire under the command of a Rear-Admiral on the active list of the Royal Navy. (*Indian Year Book*, 1931, p. 312-314; Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, "The Army and Navy in India," cited, p. 26-26.)

23. *New York Herald Tribune*, April 10, 1931.

24. Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, "The Simon Commission and the Defence of India," *The Servant of India*, August 7, 1930, p. 380.

25. *Report of the Indian Central Committee, 1928-1929* (London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1929), p. 135.

26. Cf. p. 302, footnote 15.

27. Nirad C. Chaudhari, "The 'Martial Races' of India," *The Modern Review* (Calcutta), July and September 1930, and January 1931. These articles present a statistical survey of the methods and results of the recruiting policy pursued with respect to the Indian Army.

change registered in the racial proportions of the volunteers under the stress of recruitment for the World War is evidence to the Indian mind of the results of this policy, not a proof of its absence. Moreover, the intelligence of the Indian is increasingly repelled at the thought of enlisting in a non-national army. A truly national government would have been enabled to draw out popular support and enthusiasm for the army, and would have considered it a duty to develop the soldierly qualities of the different races and communities under its charge. The menace which the Simon Commission argues exists with regard to the security of certain provinces "would and could have been avoided by a national government by a process of distributing recruitment over various provinces and communities and levelling up the general standard of military qualities."²⁸ Indian opinion claims that the necessity for immediately embarking upon such a program is the strongest argument favoring the early inauguration of responsible control of Indian military affairs.

ORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY

The measures adopted by the Government of India with regard to the military organization of the country are attacked by Indian opinion on several grounds. The slow pace of Indianization, the refusal to establish a military college in India, and the "eight units scheme" are cited as evidences of an unwillingness to develop a national army. A number of arguments are presented to support the contention that this hesitancy derives from a long-established policy designed to prevent the possibility of a general uprising by the Indian people.²⁹ It is claimed that the strict interpretation put upon the provisions of the Arms Act by the district officers charged with the issuance of licenses to bear arms has entailed the virtual disarmament of the civil population. The confinement of recruiting to certain areas and classes, and the unwillingness to provide for general military training by establishing adequate local militias are held to have further contributed to the emasculation of the

Indian people. Until quite recently, the Indian troops were excluded from the artillery and other branches of the army which required scientific or technical training, the firearms with which the Indian troops were equipped were of a much less efficient pattern than those provided for the British troops, and little education was required of the Indian officer, who was always promoted from the ranks. Furthermore, the Indian troops have been carefully arranged so as to be unlikely to combine, and Englishmen hold the key positions.³⁰ Finally, the ratio of British to Indian soldiers is eight to seven in the internal security units but one to six or seven in the frontier units of the army.

In reply it is pointed out that certain of these charges have reference to conditions which no longer exist, and are therefore not relevant to the current situation. At present the army officerships are being Indianized, and the rate at which such Indianization progresses must not be allowed to prejudice the over-riding requirements of military efficiency. It is not true that the civil population is disarmed; licenses to bear arms are issued by the proper authorities. The recruiting policy is not designed to exclude particular classes from the army. The British authorities are confronted by a fact; certain Indian races are less martial than others. Where the object is to spend money allotted for military purposes to the best advantage, it is not advisable to recruit from such races. The high proportion of British troops in the internal security units is made necessary owing to their recognized neutrality in communal disorders.

CONTROL OF THE ARMY

Ultimate authority for the control of the Indian Army is vested in the Secretary of State. His principal adviser on Indian military affairs is the Military Secretary of the India Office, a post which is filled by an officer of the Indian Army of high rank with recent Indian experience. In addition, by a practice which has obtained for many years, a retired Indian Army officer of high rank has a seat upon the Secretary of State's Council.

Owing to the control exercised by the Secretary of State, the Indian Army can be

28. Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, "The Simon Commission and the Defence of India," cited, p. 380.

29. Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, *Indian Constitutional Problems*, cited, p. 101-107.

30. G. T. Garratt, *An Indian Commentary*, cited, p. 202.

used for any Imperial purpose and dispatched to any part of the world without consent of the Indian Legislature. This fact has been clearly stated by the late Lord Curzon in the following terms:³¹

"The Indian Army in fact has always possessed and has been proud of possessing a triple function: the preservation of internal peace in India itself; the defence of the Indian frontiers; and preparedness to embark at a moment's notice for Imperial service in other parts of the globe. In this aspect, India has for long been one of the most important units in the scheme of British Imperial defence, providing the British Government with a striking force always ready, of admirable efficiency and assured valour."

The only restriction upon the power of the Imperial Government is that it cannot defray the cost of external operations by the Indian Army from the revenues of India without the consent of both Houses of Parliament. Despite this restriction, however, the cost of a number of wars in which Indian troops have participated, in countries as far separated as Abyssinia, Persia, Egypt, Afghanistan, Burma, and China, has been charged upon Indian revenues.³² British opinion justifies this action on the ground that these wars were fought in the interests of the security of India. Indian opinion, however, maintains that they were fought in the interests of British hegemony in the East, and should have been defrayed from Imperial revenues.³³

The immediate control of the Indian Army is exercised by the Commander-in-Chief, invariably a British officer, who is at the same time Army Member of the Governor-General's Executive Council. He thus exerts both military and administrative control over the army, combining in himself the ordinarily separate offices of Minister for War and Chief of Staff. Indian opinion holds that these functions should be separated, and that the controlling voice in army administration should rest with the civil power. In reply, it is argued that Parliamentary responsibility can only be made effective by combining the administrative and military control of the Indian Army in the hands of one man.

31. Merewether and Smith, *The Indian Corps in France*, cited, introduction, p. x.

32. Lajpat Rai, *England's Debt to India* (New York, B. W. Huebsch, 1917), p. 103-118.

33. *Report on the Financial Obligations between Great Britain and India* (Bombay, All-India Congress Committee, 1931), p. 21-27.

COST OF THE ARMY

The expenditure for the Indian Army, under a scheme introduced in 1928-1929, has been stabilized for a period of four years (since extended to five) at Rs. 55.1 crores (roughly \$205,000,000) a year.³⁴ This sum has been reached only after substantial reductions effected since 1923, in accordance with the recommendations of the Retrenchment Committee. Nevertheless, the army expenditure still remains the chief burden upon the central budget. British India ranks seventh among the Powers in respect to military expenditure; its total outlay upon armament is between two and three times as great as the whole of the rest of the Empire, excluding Great Britain; its defense expenditure has risen greatly since 1913 even after allowing for the rise of prices up to 1928, and has increased more rapidly than in other parts of the Empire.³⁵ The stabilized annual charge of approximately \$205,000,000 amounted in 1929-1930 to 62½ per cent of the total net central expenditure of British India, and to 31½ per cent of the total net central and provincial expenditures taken together.³⁶ The ratio of 62½ per cent is contrasted with the corresponding figures in the self-governing Dominions: 5.8 per cent for Australia, 4.2 per cent for Canada, 3.9 per cent for New Zealand, 3.5 per cent for South Africa, and 7.2 per cent for the Irish Free State in the fiscal year 1927-1928.³⁷ These differences, Indian opinion claims, are too pronounced to be attributed solely to the more favorable conditions of the Dominions with regard to defense. The really effective cause of this disparity is to be sought in the high cost of maintaining 60,000 British troops and 6,700 British officers in India.³⁸ A national army, manned and officered by Indians, would, it is asserted, effect a large saving in the army estimates.

The Simon Commission points out, however, that the extraordinary needs of India with respect to defense are wholly without

34. *Indian Statutory Commission*, cited, Vol. I, p. 362; Vol. II, p. 223.

35. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 216-217.

36. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 216.

37. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 93, footnote.

38. The Simon Commission estimates that a British soldier costs between three and four times as much as an Indian soldier (Vol. I, p. 94). Indians claim that a British soldier costs four or five times as much (*Indian Round Table Conference*, London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1931, p. 90).

parallel in the case of the self-governing Dominions, which are either islands or else located near friendly neighbors.³⁹ The Dominions, also, are untroubled by the unique difficulties presented by the martial races and communal disorders of India. Moreover, in a country as large as India, where nearly half the revenues are expended by the provincial governments, the ratio of 31½ rather than 62½ per cent should be accepted as the just measure of India's armament expenditures. Even this figure is made to appear larger than it is by reason of the fact that other kinds of expenditure are low. India has a comparatively small unproductive debt, and many forms of government service are very little developed. It should also be noted that the period of stabilized expenditure has been extended a fifth year in order to provide for the needs of the program of army mechanization now under way. It is estimated that this program will be entirely financed from savings made during the five-year period at a total cost of Rs. 10 crores (some \$36,000,000).⁴⁰ Upon completion of the program, further reduction in the army budget is anticipated.

The lack of responsible control over the military budget of British India has given rise to a further group of controversial issues. At present the army budget is a non-votable charge upon Indian revenues drafted by the Governor-General in Council. It is asserted by Indians that the dependence of this body upon the Imperial Government has rendered it difficult for the Government of India to resist military claims upon India that are pressed by the Imperial War Office.⁴¹ An example of the operation of this factor is seen in the costly program of army mechanization now in progress, enforced by the Imperial War Office, although its necessity on the basis of Indian military requirements is questioned. The outstanding issue in this respect, however, is the number of British troops maintained in India, which, it is claimed, could be radically curtailed without seriously prejudicing India's military security, as witnessed by the drastic

reduction of British troops in India during the World War. On the present basis it is argued that the Imperial Government is enabled to secure the support and training of a considerable body of British troops, not actually needed in India, at India's expense. Especial difficulty has arisen in this connection over the payment of the capitation rate, i.e., the cost of raising, training, equipping, and transporting the annual reliefs and drafts from England, estimated at so much per British soldier. The Government of India itself has resisted payment of this item since 1907, on the ground that it was legitimately chargeable to the British Government, but the Imperial War Office has successfully maintained its claim. Meanwhile, although the case has been almost continuously *sub judice*, the capitation rate was raised at the beginning of the war from £7:10s to £11:8s per head. This sum was collected from India during the World War, although at that time there was no transportation of the annual drafts and reliefs. In 1924 the rate was again raised, this time to £28:10s per head, with retroactive effect from April 1, 1920.

In reply, however, it is argued that issues of this nature must be decided on the basis of the over-riding requirements of military efficiency and security. It is pointed out that under modern conditions of warfare, if the Indian Army is to be worth anything, mechanization is unavoidable. The capitation rate, it is said, is after all a charge for British soldiers employed in the Indian Army and engaged in preserving the security and tranquillity of India. This question, moreover, was submitted to an arbiter in England in 1907, and the decision arrived at failed to sustain the Government of India's claim that the capitation rate should be an Imperial charge.⁴²

TRANSITION TO MILITARY RESPONSIBILITY

The central difficulty of the Indian military problem concerns the length of time involved in and the method by which responsible control of the Indian Army can be achieved. The Simon Commission, in this

39. *Indian Statutory Commission*, cited, Vol. I, p. 93-98.

40. *India in 1928-29* (Calcutta, Government of India, Central Publication Branch, 1929), p. 239.

41. "Memorandum by the Honorable Sir Sankaran Nair et al," *Report of the Indian Central Committee, 1928-29*, cited, p. 132-140.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 136. The Government of India, however, continued to resist this claim up to 1928, when it was again decided to resort to arbitration. The question is now in abeyance, pending the results of the round-table conference.

connection, challenges India to face the facts of the situation.⁴³ It points out that the Indian Army is as yet almost entirely staffed with British officers, and, in addition, contains some 60,000 British troops, and argues that it is impossible for an army so constituted to continue its service in India under a responsible government. It claims, further, that Indian attempts to draw parallels from colonial history are not in point, since the Dominions were so circumstanced at the time of their transition to responsible government that the practical risk of external invasion or internal disorder did not exist in any comparable degree. The determining factor is the urgency of the risks involved in each case. The difficulties of the Indian military situation have not existed elsewhere in the Empire, and it is the formidable nature of these difficulties that must be faced and overcome before responsible government can become a reality.

These arguments, however, Indian opinion claims, are of such a nature that they could be utilized to block the achievement of responsible military control indefinitely. They lose sight of the necessity of taking adequate steps to transfer the army to Indian control in order to afford a conclusive test of the difficulties involved. It is pointed out that the alternative urged by the Simon Commission, in view of the systematic manner by which England has deprived India of all opportunity to provide for its own defense during the past seventy-five years, is hardly fair. An Indianization program that provides for staffing eight units of the army with Indian officers by 1946, moreover, is held to be little advance upon the old policy. In short, Indians claim that not until England is prepared to initiate great changes in the Indian Army, in order to put Indian military capacity to the test, is it possible for her to argue India's inability to provide for its defense as a bar to responsible government.

Indian opinion, however, does not minimize the difficulties of the transition period. It asks that these be faced by granting India the opportunity to assume the burden of its defense on terms as favorable as those offered to the self-governing Dominions at similar

periods in their history. Such terms require the full cooperation of England in effecting the transition. It is recognized that the immediate withdrawal of all British officers would throw the Indian Army into chaos. No army could face the prospect of an overnight loss of its officers with equanimity. Indians ask only that Britain cooperate with India in replacing British troops and officers with Indian troops and officers on a fixed schedule over a period of, say, ten years—a step which Britain has steadfastly refused to contemplate. Given this opportunity, India is not unwilling to reserve ultimate responsibility for the army to the Governor-General during the period of transition. Nevertheless, it points out that the proposition that British troops and officers could not continue their service in India under a responsible government was not rigorously enforced in the case of the Dominions. Imperial troops were kept in the colonies for some years after the attainment of responsible government, for the purpose of helping them to maintain internal security, and these troops were only withdrawn by the Imperial Government after adequate notice of its intention to do so had been given.⁴⁴

India claims, moreover, that there are many circumstances which entitle it to put its military capacity to the test on the basis of an even more favorable treatment than that accorded the colonies. Unlike the colonial militias, the Indian Army has in effect been an Imperial force, and as such has been utilized for Imperial purposes in many parts of the world. Furthermore, so far as Imperial forces were required for the purpose, the cost of defending the colonies was borne entirely by the Imperial Government. In 1858 the total cost of defense of the colonies was £4,000,000, of which only £380,000 was contributed by the colonies themselves.⁴⁵ India, however, from the beginning of the British connection, has raised and maintained its own army and found the men and money for the purpose. The military expenditure incurred in maintaining internal order or in defending itself against foreign aggression or in carrying on wars against

44. Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, *Indian Constitutional Problems*, cited, p. 99.

45. A. B. Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions* (Oxford University Press, 1928), 2nd ed., Vol. II, p. 966.

43. *Indian Statutory Commission*, cited, Vol. I, p. 98-100.

the Indian States has always been met by the Indian Exchequer and never by the British Treasury. Taking into account India's loyal military and financial aid to the Empire, as well as England's past failure to take adequate steps to foster India's military independence, Indian opinion now claims that it is justified in requesting whole-hearted British support in preparing the Indian Army to stand on its own feet as rapidly as possible.

ARMY ISSUES AT THE CONFERENCE

The subcommittee on defense, appointed by the round-table conference, emphasized the ultimate responsibility of the Crown for the defense of India, exercised through the Committee of Imperial Defense—a responsibility that was not special to India but common to the Empire as a whole.⁴⁶ On the question of Indianization two differing views were reported by the subcommittee. The majority held that it was impossible for practical reasons to lay down any definite rate of Indianization, while a minority favored a strong affirmation that the complete Indianization of the officers in the Indian Army should take place within a specified period, subject only to the requirements of efficiency and to the provision of suitable candidates. Nevertheless, the subcommittee considered that under the new political developments the defense of India must to an increasing extent become the concern of the Indian people, and not of the British Government alone. In order to give practical effect to this principle, it recommended that immediate steps be taken to increase substantially the rate of Indianization in the Indian Army, and that a military college be established in India at the earliest possible moment to train candidates for commissions in all arms of the Indian defense services. In order to avoid delay, it further recommended that the Government of India be instructed to set up a committee of experts, both British and Indian, to work out the details of the establishment of such a college.⁴⁷

46. *Indian Round Table Conference*, cited, p. 393-395.

47. This committee (Chairman: Sir Philip Chetwode) presented its report early in July 1931. It proposed the establishment in 1932 of an Indian military college capable of training 60 cadets a year, and advocated extending the "eight units scheme" so as to Indianize one complete division of the Indian Army (requiring 870 officers) by 1946. (*Christian Science Monitor*, July 8, 1931.)

The subcommittee also recognized the great importance attached by Indian thought to the reduction of the number of British troops in India to the lowest possible figure, and recommended that the question should form the subject of early expert investigation. Finally, the subcommittee agreed to the advisability of establishing a Military Council for India, including representatives of the Indian States.

The subcommittee on defense made no attempt to deal with the problem of administrative responsibility for the Indian Army, since the federal structure subcommittee had recommended that this power was to be retained by the Governor-General. It is unlikely, however, that this reservation will be accepted by Mahatma Gandhi. A possible compromise on this issue is reported to have been tentatively worked out during the conversations preceding the signing of the Gandhi-Irwin agreement.⁴⁸ According to this report, the defense of India during the transitional period is to be regarded as a subject forming part of the defense problem of the British Empire as a whole under the Imperial Committee of Defense. The principle that India should be finally responsible for its own defense is admitted, however, and an Indian army committee is to be constituted, consisting of the commander-in-chief and chief of the general staff, and representatives of the Federal Legislature and of the Indian States, with the Indian Defense Minister as chairman. Normally, the Governor-General would exercise his powers only upon the advice of the army committee. This body would also be responsible for drawing up the military budget, which would be recognized as a first charge on Indian revenues. In extraordinary cases, however, the Governor-General would have power to act on his own initiative, but such cases would be specifically defined and limited. As Indianization proceeds and the British troops are gradually reduced, the British representatives on the committee will be replaced by Indians until it becomes an Indian Military Council, which, like the other government departments, will have to go to the Federal Legislature for its annual budget.

48. *New York Herald Tribune*, June 21, 1931.